

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 37 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

National Partnership Office

1400 Independence Ave., SW
Room 4225-S, Mail Stop 3205
Washington, DC 20250
Phone: 202-690-2394
Fax: 202-690-1262

World Wide Web:
<http://rurdev.usda.gov/nrdp>



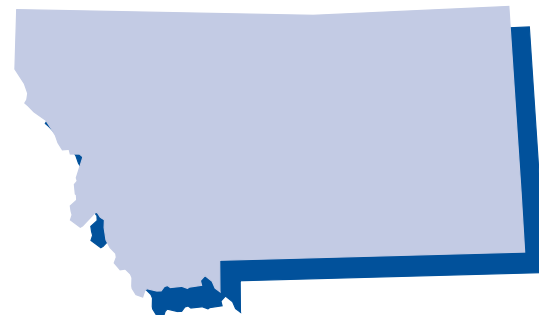
**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc.

"Together we can achieve the extraordinary" is the motto that guides the Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc. (MT RDP), and rightly so. Strengthening rural communities and building partnerships in one of our country's largest and most rural states is an extraordinary task. Created in 1993 by a state caucus as part of a national initiative to strengthen rural America, MT RDP provides a non-partisan forum for identifying, discussing, and acting on issues that affect rural Montana communities.

MT RDP has been successful in encouraging economic change through technology and education. The Council has educated rural communities in such critical areas as brownfields redevelopment, telecommunications policy, and Internet training. It also serves as a conduit to the National Rural Development Partnership for local agencies struggling with projects or issues. Throughout 2000, MT RDP will support and participate in Ag Vision 2005 activities, continue to promote



e-commerce opportunities for local businesses, and focus on local leadership development.

Contacting MT RDP

Gene Vuckovich

Executive Director
Montana Rural Development
Partners, Inc.

118 East Seventh Street,
Suite 2A

Anaconda, MT 59711

Phone: 406-563-5259

Fax: 406-563-5476

E-Mail: genev@ixi.net
(for Gene Vuckovich)
gloria@ixi.net
(for Gloria O'Rourke,
Project Coordinator)

Website: <http://www.mtrdp.org>

Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc., general membership brings together representatives from for-profit and non-profit organizations and tribal, local, state, and federal governments. Its 19-member Executive Committee meets quarterly and includes:

- ▼ Judy Martz, Lt. Governor
- ▼ Jim Smitham, Economic Development Specialist, MPC
- ▼ Victor Miller, Blaine County Commissioner
- ▼ Jim Davison, Director, Anaconda Local Development Corp.
- ▼ Arthur Stiffarm, Ft. Belknap Planning Department
- ▼ Andy Poole, Deputy Director, Dept. of Commerce
- ▼ Joseph Menicucci, City Manager, Belgrade, MT
- ▼ Penny Copps, Montana Ambassadors
- ▼ Dean Graham, USFS, Rural Development Specialist
- ▼ Evan Barrett, Executive Director, Butte Local Development Corp.
- ▼ Dr. Lloyd Chesnut, V.P. of Research and Administration, University of Montana-Missoula
- ▼ Linda Reed, Community Affairs Manager, U S WEST
- ▼ Gary Carlson, Vice President, Anderson ZurMuehlen & Co.
- ▼ John Rogers, Economic Development Officer/DOC/EDA
- ▼ Robert Leigland, State Director, USDA/RD
- ▼ Gene Vuckovich, Executive Director
- ▼ Gloria O'Rourke, Project Coordinator



Printed on recycled paper

NRDP State Profile

March 2000

Montana Rural Development Partners, Inc., at Work

Marketing on the Net

The MT RDP Internet Training Program uses technology to help Montana businesses become competitive in the world marketplace. Through its portable 10-laptop-computer lab, the Council provides computer training, Internet education and marketing, website development, and temporary web hosting to economic development agencies, small business owners, and small governmental and/or non-profit entities.

MT RDP also serves as the scheduling point of contact for the U S WEST Widening Our World (WOW) van. The WOW van travels the state, providing on-site Internet training to businesses, teachers, and individuals. This partnership has helped the council engage rural residents in technology training and enabled U S WEST to better publicize the free educational services it offers to communities.

Helping Cities and Counties Go Online

MT RDP has teamed with the Montana Association of Counties and the League of Cities and Towns to provide website development training for every city and county in Montana. Working with a community leader in Liberty County, the Council held a two-day Community Web Page Development Workshop, during which MT RDP trainers traveled over 600 miles to assist four counties develop web pages. As a result, participating counties should soon be ready to go online. Until a local internet service provider is available, MT RDP has offered to temporarily host the websites to promote local businesses and tourism.

Community Action Meetings

Through its four regional meetings held annually in each area of Montana, MT RDP provides small communities a forum for presenting their development priorities, problems, concerns, and activities. Com-

munities inform the Council before their region's meeting about which local issues they want to address, allowing MT RDP to bring appropriate materials, information, and agency representatives to explore solutions to those issues.

Building Community Leadership

A 1998 survey conducted by MT RDP and USDA/Rural Development indicated that local leadership training ranked second only to infrastructure as the greatest need of Montana's small rural communities. To address this need, MT RDP is designing local leadership training with the Montana Department of Commerce and a mentoring program in partnership with the Montana

Economic Developers Association (MEDA). MT RDP will connect MEDA mentors with local leaders to provide leadership training and education. The program will begin as soon as the funding details are resolved by the state legislature.

"MT RDP is living proof that partnerships work."

Jim Smitham
Montana Power
Company

Brownfields Initiative

In September 1999, MT RDP co-hosted with U.S. Senator Max Baucus a successful conference on the Brownfields Initiative. Brownfields are abandoned or under-used commercial and industrial sites that are overlooked or shunned because of perceived or actual environmental concerns, liability issues, or concerns about required clean-up procedures, standards, and costs. The Brownfields Initiative addresses how communities can develop these properties to help sustain and promote community growth and make use of existing public infrastructure. MT RDP serves as the main point of contact for the initiative and is planning a follow-up conference for the fall of 2000. The conference will provide hands-on training for communities proposing to develop brownfield sites and include a visit to a successful redevelopment site in Lewistown, Montana.